

very important defense initiative. I am pleased that we are going to be able to go straight to the bill, and I hope that within short order next week we will be able to get to the conclusion of this very important national defense issue.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, let me thank the distinguished majority leader for calling up the national missile defense bill and also compliment the Democratic leader for refraining from objecting to proceeding to consider this bill at this time.

Senators may remember that this is the bill that was brought up on two occasions during the last session of the Senate and objections were made to considering the bill, a motion to proceed to consider the bill was filed, and then it was necessary to file a cloture motion to shut off debate to get to the bill. On both of those occasions we fell one vote short of invoking cloture on the motion to proceed to consider the bill. So this Senate has agreed to take up this legislation without objection. This is progress, and we are very proud to see this momentum to address this issue that is so important for the national security interests of the United States.

For the information of Senators, the operative part of this legislation is simply a statement of policy as follows:

It is the policy of the United States to deploy as soon as is technologically possible an effective National Missile Defense system capable of defending the territory of the United States against limited ballistic missile attack (whether accidental, unauthorized, or deliberate).

I look forward to discussing questions that Senators might pose about this bill when we reconvene on Monday. The Armed Services Committee has considered it and reported it out without amendment, and we are ready to proceed to consider the bill. We look forward to discussing this important issue.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now have a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ASSAULT ON WASHINGTON STATE'S CROWN JEWELS

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, over the past few years, Vice President AL GORE has made a series of trips to my home State of Washington. His goals on these trips are simple: to raise money for his political campaigns; to recruit supporters for his Presidential endeavor;

and to distract Washington State voters from the administration's true agenda for the Pacific Northwest.

The Vice President's visits to Washington State are nothing new, but recently the administration, of which he is a vital leader, has chosen to adopt policies that pose a threat to the continued vitality of our economy. Those policies are aimed at the destruction of two of Washington State's economic crown jewels: our hydropower system and Microsoft.

During the past year, I have welcomed the Vice President to Washington State by repeatedly asking him two questions: The first, Will you commit to the preservation of each of the dams on the Columbia and Snake Rivers unless Congress or the people of the Northwest agree to the removal of each or all of them? The second question: Mr. Vice President, if you are elected President, will you end the Justice Department's suit against Microsoft?

At first, these questions were answered with silence. Now the Vice President answers them with personal attacks. Whether it is silence or personal attacks, the Vice President makes clear that he does not intend to answer these two questions so fundamental to every family and community in the Northwest. These questions deserve and should receive straight answers from the Vice President, and I will continue to ask them until the Vice President does so.

His silence, of course, is eloquent. Vice President GORE's administration is responsible for the Microsoft lawsuit and for a flatout refusal to subject dam removal either to congressional authority or to the consent of the people of the Northwest. What is most illuminating is that the Vice President's silence and personal attacks in response to these questions about dams and Microsoft run counter to positions taken by top Democratic officeholders in Washington State. When it comes to protecting dams on the Columbia River, our Democratic Governor and Democratic U.S. Senator, two of the most powerful Democrats in Washington State, have already publicly opposed efforts by national environmental organizations to take out dams. But the Vice President is silent.

Last week I suggested that he had a political motive. That is my opinion, but, frankly, it doesn't matter why he pursues policies to dismantle our hydro system without being willing to say so openly. What matters is whether he will make his position clear. So who loses out on the equation? The people of Washington State, of course. And then there is Microsoft.

The good news is that most Democrats in Washington State have come forward to defend Microsoft's freedom to innovate, but the Vice President won't stand with his fellow Democrats in Washington State in support of the

company. When he answers this one, he is either silent or he attacks and then attempts to evade the question.

Here is a recent example of the Vice President's verbal dance when it comes to the issue of protecting Microsoft: Last week, I admonished the administration for its assault on that company. In responding to my statement, the Vice President's spokeswoman said that I am "suffering from a Y2K bug" and have forgotten all the wonderful things AL GORE has done for Washington State. Specifically, the spokeswoman cited hundreds of thousands of new jobs, higher home ownership rates and lower welfare rolls, as if he were responsible for them.

There was no answer to the central question—will you work to end the suit against Microsoft?

There was another troubling side to this statement. The Vice President, of course, was attempting to take credit for the booming economy in the State that I represent. He should understand that that success comes from the hundreds of thousands of hard-working Washingtonians, plus Microsoft and the amazing group of entrepreneurs who have developed new and better systems, plus our natural resources, not the least of which is our low-cost electricity, or all of the smaller high-tech companies that have sprung up overnight. This success does not come from the Vice President.

As to the specifics of the Justice Department's case against Microsoft, the so-called high-tech Vice President says he will not comment on or involve himself in the Justice Department's case against the company. Can we believe that as the administration's point man on high-tech issues, he has no opinion whatsoever on the highest profile high-tech issue before his administration—the future of Microsoft? I do not believe it, nor does anyone else.

To claim that he is not involved in an action spearheaded by his own administration is unbelievable. When the Vice President continually refuses to answer the question of whether or not he supports this attack, he has not been straight with the people of the State of Washington.

There is a simple answer to the Microsoft question. The answer is for the Vice President to tell us that if he is elected President, he will stop the Justice Department's pursuit of Microsoft. We Washingtonians are 3,000 miles away from the center of AL GORE's universe, but we know only too well that the actions of this administration can have a long and detrimental impact on our economy, our way of life and on our future. We deserve more from the Vice President than silence, distraction and personal attacks.

We will remember his silence on what are perhaps the most important Federal public policy questions to face our State in years. We will remember his